

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE **A-1**

WASHINGTON POST
9 July 1985

Sudan Sets Arms Pact With Libya

Logistical Support, Training Included; Cairo Ties Strained

By Christopher Dickey
Washington Post Foreign Service

CAIRO, July 8—Sudan, in a move that could further damage its once close alliance with Egypt and its strategic links to the United States, has announced a military pact for logistical support and training with the revolutionary government of Libya.

The move was announced in Khartoum today after Sudanese Defense Minister Maj. Gen. Osman Abdullah Mohammed spent more than a week in Tripoli meeting with Muammar Qaddafi and top Libyan military officials.

The protocol signed there, according to the state-owned Sudanese newspaper Al Sahafa and Sudanese diplomats interviewed here, provides for Libyan help with logistics, transport, equipment, training programs and "aspects of navy and air defense."

Further details on its scope were not available.

Since a coup April 6 ended the 16-year rule of Sudanese president Jaafar Nimeri, there has been concern in Cairo and Washington that the new government could come under Qaddafi's influence.

Egyptians also fear the possibility of virtual encirclement by hostile neighbors, with Libya to the west, Sudan to the south and Israel, with whom relations have been cool, to the east.

Sudan is the largest country in Africa and of major strategic importance. It borders eight other nations, as well as the Red Sea. It also effectively controls the upper

reaches of the Nile, which is central to Egypt's survival.

Traditionally, Egypt has had strong, often decisive impact on events in Sudan. Under Nimeri,

Sudan broke relations with Libya and signed integration and mutual defense pacts with Egypt. Nimeri—who has taken refuge in Egypt and whose extradition Sudan is demanding—was also the rare Arab leader to have supported Egypt's signing of the Camp David accords with Israel.

Pushed by popular discontent with the alleged abuses of the Nimeri government and the pressures of a growing rebellion in the non-Moslem south led by John Garang, a former Sudanese Army colonel, top military commanders seized power promising to open the country up to democracy.

Gen. Abdel Rahman Sawar-Dhabab, the leader of the coup, has said he would maintain close ties with Egypt but would normalize relations with all of Sudan's neighbors, including Libya and the Marxist government in Ethiopia.

By doing so, Sudanese officials have said they hoped to end the crucial support those two countries gave to Garang's growing insurrection.

Defense Minister Mohammed, a key member of Sudan's policy-making Transitional Military Council, told the Sudanese press that Libya would be trying to arrange peace talks with the southern Sudanese rebels.

Mohammed said Libya has "no intention of forming any strategic alliance with Sudan or of interfering in Sudan's domestic and foreign policies."

Mohammed was quoted by the Libyan news agency as thanking "the Libyan brothers" for wanting to "raise the level of the Sudanese armed forces which were weakened under the regime of Nimeri."

The announcement of the new military protocol comes as relations between Cairo and the new Sudanese government already are strained by protests in Khartoum demanding that Nimeri, now in exile here, be extradited for trial on charges of treason.

As many as 40,000 Sudanese reportedly protested in front of the Egyptian Embassy in Khartoum Thursday demanding that Nimeri

be extradited. They reportedly were organized by some of the same student committees instrumental in setting the stage for the April coup and the provisional government now in place.

The Nimeri case is complicated further because the main charges against him in Sudan stem from his cooperation with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and Israel in the secret evacuation of Ethiopian Jews to Israel.

The trial of Nimeri *in absentia* and his former first vice president, Omar Tayyeb, now in a Khartoum prison, is expected to begin in the next several days, according to Sudanese diplomats here.

U.S. officials have taken exhaustive security precautions in Khartoum because of concern that Libyan agents being infiltrated into Sudan may strike at American representatives there.

The United States supplied most of the economic support of the Nimeri government and continues to underwrite the current rulers, particularly with food support. The nation is virtually bankrupt and wracked by famine that could cost hundreds of thousands of lives.

Egypt and Sudan, one Foreign Ministry official here said recently, "have to be friends, it's their geographical fate."

But Egypt and Libya are bitter enemies. There are announcements here almost monthly that Libyan-backed terrorists have been apprehended and plots thwarted.

Today Egyptian and Sudanese officials here maintained silence about the implications of the pact. But Egypt's concern about developments in Sudan has been increasingly evident in the past few weeks.

On June 17, President Hosni Mubarak paid a surprise visit to Khartoum and met with Sawar-Dhabab for 1½ hours of what were described as "frank" discussions.

On June 25, Egypt said it would be willing to review the economic and military agreements it had signed with Nimeri if the Sudanese people wanted to do so.

Egyptian officials have said privately that they believe the protests at their embassy in Khartoum were the work of pro-Libyan elements trying to provoke a break between Egypt and Sudan.

Senior Sudanese diplomats here, however, insist that the fears of growing Libyan influence in Khartoum are ill-founded.

"We have been very clear," one Sudanese official said. "We are normalizing relations with all our neighboring countries."